

# FIGHTING TALK

Issue 21

Price £1.50

**Anti-Fascist  
Action**

**CIVIL  
RIGHTS?**

**FRONT COVER:** Riot police attacking striking mine-workers, Orgreave Colliery 1984. Home Secretary Jack Straw recently announced that within ten years 25% of Metropolitan Police officers should come from ethnic minority backgrounds. This is supposed to have something to do with civil rights! Somehow we doubt whether it will make a truncheon in the face taste any better.

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## AFA on the Internet

The AFA Web Site is back on line at:  
**[www.geocities.com/capitolhill/senate/5602](http://www.geocities.com/capitolhill/senate/5602)**

## APPEAL FOR INFORMATION

**WE URGE ALL OUR READERS TO SEND ANY INFORMATION ON FASCISTS IN THEIR AREA DIRECT TO AFA. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO GUARANTEE THE MILITANT ANTI-FASCIST MOVEMENT HAS THE NECESSARY INFORMATION TO SUCCESSFULLY BEAT THE FASCISTS.**

# JOIN AFA



Contact the National Office for details of local activities / contacts

### AFA CONTACTS

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Please note that a number of AFA branches have had recent problems with their PO Boxes. When writing to an AFA branch please notify the National Office so we can check if mail has arrived.

**AFA NATIONAL OFFICE**  
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# IN THE AREA



Welcome to Issue 21 of Fighting Talk. We start with our usual round up of news and views from the front line against fascism

## NEWCASTLE GIG

An AFA benefit was held in Newcastle in December, featuring the North East's finest, Red London and Red Alert. The gig was a great success and well attended. The fascists have been active in the North East recently and it was anticipated there might be an attempt to attack the gig so the Northern Network mobilised stewards. As predicted, an hour into the gig about 15 large fascists showed up, led by ex-London BNP activist Simon Biggs and including members of the fascist band Crashed Out.

Biggs charged across the road wielding a spring-loaded cosh followed by two others liberally spraying ammonia, trying to blind the AFA stewards. The stewards engaged the fascists and Biggs was put down while the two ammonia men squealed "no weapons!" as they were confronted and chased. All the fascists fled into the night. The weapons used, particularly the ammonia, indicate an escalation in the level of violence; although out of step with general BNP strategy, this has been noted.

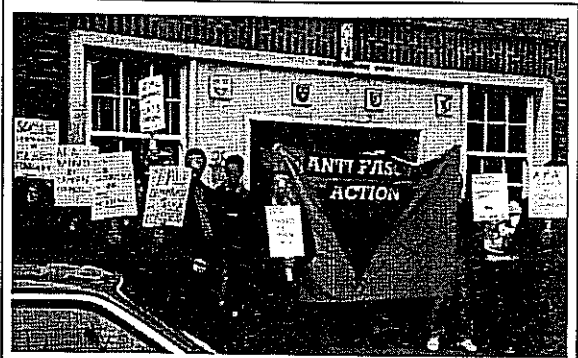
## SCOTLAND

Glasgow AFA hosted a benefit gig recently that saw 3 local bands giving their services for free. 3-D Scream, Four Past Midnight and last minute stand-ins Pellet (cheers lads) turned in blistering sets in front of an enthusiastic Thursday night crowd. A watchful stewards group stood guard all night, and even a last minute visit from the boys in blue, who had been keeping a close eye on the proceedings, couldn't spoil the night. Cheers to the 13th Note for letting us stage the event and thanks again to the bands and punters for their support.

Edinburgh AFA got in on the act soon after with a benefit gig by Recidivist at The Tap. Another successful night so yet more money for AFA.

## AFA BAN OVERTURNED

AFA is pleased to announce that the long running dispute with Camden Council and the Irish Centre, regarding the banning of AFA's International Conference in October 1997, has been resolved. Initially a series of activities were arranged to highlight the ban and put pressure on the Council to reverse the decision. A demonstration was held outside the Irish Centre and two Council meetings were picketed.



Flashback: AFA picket of Irish Centre 1997

AFA argued that Camden Council, by banning AFA, was taking on itself to decide what constituted anti-fascism, and at a time when the Far Right are stronger right across Europe than at any time since the end of the Second World War, this would serve as considerable encouragement to the BNP.

When the Labour leader of the Council, Richard Arthur, responded to AFA's first picket by publicly endorsing the ban, the BNP, as predicted, were quick to go into print themselves supporting the Council. As we said at the time "Camden Council have achieved what has up to now proved beyond the BNP and stopped us, if only temporarily."

AFA was determined not to let the matter drop, realising that reactionary elements could use the ban to justify further exclusions, and it would be a useful weapon in the State's ongoing campaign to try and isolate and criminalise militant opposition. Not only had AFA been banned from the Irish Centre and had to rearrange an entire International Conference at 6 days notice (!), but inevitably this caused a considerable financial loss having already had to pay for numerous items in advance. Much of the finance for the conference would have

been raised by the gig planned for the Saturday night - but this too was banned.

Initial negotiations to resolve the issue soon collapsed but AFA decided to pursue the matter, not prepared to leave the ban unchallenged or suffer the financial damage it had caused. Legal advice was sought and a long and protracted process was started, lasting nearly a year. It says much for AFA's determination to challenge the growth of the Far Right in this difficult period that the case was pursued with so much vigour. In previous times it may have been seen as a diversion from the 'real struggle' to bother with lengthy legal disputes, but the importance of defending anti-fascists' right to operate cannot be overstated. The alternative is for the BNP, with their 'respectable' Euro-Nationalist electoral strategy, to grow unopposed.

AFA's persistence finally paid off when an agreement was reached with the Council and the Irish Centre, shortly before the date for the court case. A four-figure sum was paid to AFA and the ban overturned.

The lesson is clear, every obstacle that is put in AFA's path must be challenged. Although AFA may be unused to this particular area of struggle, persistence and a keen attention to detail led to a satisfactory result.

**HARDCORE AFA: Top hardcore bands The Voorhees, Hard To Swallow, Spy vs. Spy and Solanki have signed up to the militant anti-fascist cause and will be playing AFA benefits in Manchester and Bradford. The Manchester benefit is on Wed. 19th May at The Star and Garter, followed by the 1 in 12 Club in Bradford on Wed. 26th May. Check the music press for final line up details.**

**SEARCHLIGHT**

AFA took the unusual step of issuing a statement announcing the closure of the Leeds and Huddersfield branches in April 1998 (see FT19 for details). The primary reason was the involvement of Searchlight operatives at an organisational level, despite AFA policy "that Searchlight has a separate agenda to our own ... and have in the not too distant past used individuals and organisations to manipulate, exploit or subvert AFA policy and initiatives." The conclusion was that "membership or association with the Searchlight team is incompatible with AFA membership." Any future relationship with Searchlight will be done formally through the National Office.

When it became clear that Searchlight were continuing to try and influence the Northern Network through their supporters in Leeds AFA, they were challenged. Leeds AFA vehemently denied any collaboration, and in particular insisted that an unnamed journalist friend, who was the source of information AFA was supposed to act upon, had nothing to do with Searchlight. Well, to cut a long story short, the 'unnamed journalist' has just been installed as the new editor of Searchlight!

**CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

The National Civil Rights Movement was launched in London on Sunday 28th March. Several hundred people attended the event, including London AFA who gave out a leaflet which made a number of proposals regarding the direction that the Civil Rights Movement needs to take to avoid excluding the white working class.

Since the Lawrence Report was published a number of people have commented on the need to include white working class people in the civil rights equation or face the possibility of further division between black and white. Despite these comments there were no representatives of the Hillsborough families or similar white British victims of injustice to speak alongside the relatives of black people murdered by racists. It is perfectly possible to provide this balance in future and the London AFA presence on the Steering Committee will be arguing for this.

As anti-fascists we are only too aware of how eager the BNP are to claim to be the sole representatives of the white working class and the AFA strategy is designed to prevent this scenario. Some months before the Civil Rights Movement was launched AFA was involved in a conference on race attacks, and it was clear that there are youth and community workers who share AFA's concerns that existing race policies are not working and in some cases making things worse. Urgent steps need to be taken to prevent working class communities becoming even further divided along racial lines.

Although AFA was already developing a strategy to tackle the issue of race attacks, the Lawrence Report and subsequent launching of the Civil Rights Movement has put the issue onto an even wider agenda. Working class militants must take the opportunity to challenge the failed policies of the past and argue strongly for 'civil rights for all'.



**WEST MIDLANDS**

The BNP have attempted to win support in Redditch, via the Lodge Park anti-mosque campaign. New regional BNP press officer, Simon Darby of Cannock, achieved considerable media coverage by claiming that the BNP had distributed several thousand leaflets around the issue and had a promising response from the residents concerned. AFA supporters in the area knew this was a complete fabrication. So in order to stress the point and try to allay any local concern an AFA stewards group visited the area in October, distributing 3,500 leaflets around the vicinity of the proposed mosque site. The Redditch papers ran a

story from AFA stating that the BNP would be "removed" from the area if they did show. This in turn prompted the BNP to make a public statement the following week demanding police protection from Anti-Fascist Action. A few years ago this would have been considered something of a propaganda victory on AFA's part. However the BNP haven't suddenly become media masochists. This move should be viewed in the context of a party geared towards mainstream acceptance, a fascist outfit trying to imitate its European counterparts in lifting itself out of the ghetto of fringe politics. One of their stated aims in this pursuit of respectability is to 'legitimise' their own political operation, which effectively criminalises AFA from the outset. AFA observers and supporters should bear this in mind. Redditch was only a 'toe in the water' - the first tentative steps of a new, potentially more dynamic and strategically improved BNP.

All in all they've been surprisingly patient with their tactical shift, particularly considering the fact that the former National Democrats' Black Country branch is thriving with both resources and numbers. This reflects a greater political maturity than previously shown - like AFA, in the absence of immediate and consuming street activity they're learning to operate with a better long term perspective. The Black Country branch alone has enough members to hold 'public' events and, with a little help from the sensationalist media, create a wave of public hysteria. They will continue to exploit media negligence and gullibility, but they will not foolishly expose themselves to AFA attack. If Redditch is to be taken as a reflection of tactics then they will box clever, until such a time as they have a mandate within the communities in which they're operating, such as happened in East London in the early 90s, and much of Europe - the templates from which the strategy was derived.

Since the autumn the BNP have made Tipton a focal point for their grassroots work, as we predicted they would. Riding on the back of the NF's electoral persistence in the 70s (polling up to 16.9%), and the National Democrats' subsequent Residents Association work, the BNP have made efforts to reintegrate fascism into a potentially receptive community.

In Great Barr 2 BNP members recently cleaned up a neglected churchyard, apparently gaining gratitude and support from local residents who'd spent years demanding the council take action to no avail. Again, a reflection of the

shortcomings of purely physical opposition where such a low key, locally supported, populist formula is applied. How can AFA counter that? Smash the gravestones, owing to the fact that they represent a small but nonetheless significant furtherance of fascist ideology? Obviously not. Its a small example of a big shortcoming, of AFA's previously limited physical solution. AFA members in Newtown were quicker than the BNP in recognising the scope for addressing local concerns, without the barrier of preconceived ideology, and we know how easy it is to sway people towards progression, in our case, or reaction in the case of the BNP.

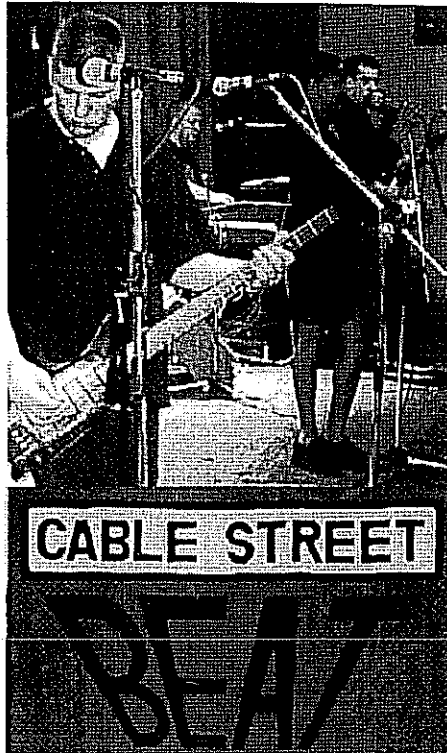
Don't take our word for it - read Spearhead or the British Nationalist and you'll see the objective clearly outlined. Its a strategic shift that effectively negates the use of street violence as a singular counter measure, and AFA combatants and supporters should be aware of these developments. AFA intelligence officers will reliably tell you that the West Mids BNP have a good enough looking mob to give AFA a decent contest - but the fact that they haven't is proof of the seriousness with which they take the national policy of "No more meetings, marches or punch ups". If militants, including many seasoned and valued veterans, choose to ignore them and persist with only wanting to get involved "if it goes off", then we may find ourselves in a situation much like that in France, or any number of other European countries, a few years down the line. If West Mids BNP remain focused, disciplined and resilient we might find ourselves doing too little, too late.

As a footnote it should be stressed that no-one in AFA ever adhered to accepting the 'Anybody But Fascists' syndrome, so prevalent in the ANL and other superficial bandwagon opportunists. AFA is, by its very make-up, of the class and for the class. AFA's undoubted physical dexterity has only ever been billed as a rearguard action, a means to an end, not the end itself. With a blatantly anti-working class government attacking our class, and the fascist BNP courting respectability whilst basing an entire class strategy around exploiting Labour's betrayal, where, if anywhere, do AFA militants stand? At this critical point we each ought to ask; "What difference do I make?"

## IRELAND

At AFA Ireland's annual meeting in Dublin, also held in October, a message of support was read out from Mick O'Riordan, anti-fascist veteran of the International Brigades. "Comrades

# OCTOBER RALLY



AFA's annual rally commemorating the Battle of Cable Street was held in London at the beginning of October. There was a public meeting on Friday 2nd October with speakers from the Celtic Campaign Against Sectarian Attacks, Newtown Independent Residents Association (Birmingham), AFA and a guest speaker from Red Antifa (Berlin) in Germany.

On Saturday a well attended internal discussion reviewed the current situation and discussed strategies for the future, and this was followed by a successful Cable Beat Street gig featuring the excellent ska sounds of Selector, and DJ Gary Clail. On Sunday 4th October there was a screening of the Black Panther film 'All Power To The People' and the '43 Group', introduced by the veteran Morris Beckman.

Selector on stage and the Cable Street banner.

of Anti-Fascist Action, warmest greetings to your gathering in Dublin. 62 years ago on another October there was a fighting anti-fascist militant demonstration which inflicted a victory against Sir Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts, protected as they were by the British Tory Party's police force. This has gone down in history as the Battle of Cable Street of October 4th 1936. The British fascist forces attacked that East London Jewish area in the belief that they would strike terror against its working class inhabitants and at the same time they would inveigle the Irish immigrants, mostly seamen and dockers, to be on the Blackshirts' side, or to be passive spectators of the fascist pogrom. But the opposite happened. The Irish stood shoulder to shoulder with their neighbours and defeated both the Blackshirts and their police protectors. Both the Cable Street battle and the Spanish struggle were splendid examples of unity and alliance. Salud! No Pasaran! Passaremos!" It is always good to see anti-fascists from a previous generation endorse the actions of militants today.

Still in Ireland its good to hear that, further north, Cliftonville supporters flew a large 'Cliftonville Redskins' banner at the game against Linfield in November. This was in response to fascist flags being flown by Linfield and Glentoran supporters.

## CHUMBAWUMBA

February's postbag brought a welcome surprise in the shape of a £500 cheque from Chumbawumba "towards the continued production of Fighting Talk". We would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the band for their generosity and we can safely say this issue is sponsored by Chumbawumba!

We would also like to thank the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group for their generous donation of £100. As AFA prepares to step up a gear to meet the challenges of the coming period we hope the examples set by Chumbawumba and the LDMG will be followed by others!

## AND FINALLY ...

Here at FT we're always looking to widen our horizons, and browsing through September's issue of 'Chat' magazine we were drawn to an article in the True Story section titled "My husband was rubbish ... now I've got the best man." The words were obviously moving, if predictable, but the pictures ... the 'best man' in the story, with name and address kindly supplied, proudly poses in a (Blood & Honour) Squadron T-shirt!

# BEHIND ENEMY LINES



with Vern Ethered

The recent BBC documentary on the Far Right (see "Between the Sheets p.21) was intended to give the impression of a bunch of sad nutters in terminal decline. February's Spearhead, however, revealed in advance of the programme that the BNP was under no illusion as to the documentary's intention but still saw it as a good chance to get mainstream publicity: *"The BNP... prefers to dwell in the real world of national politics rather than the ivory-tower world inhabited by those with no serious hopes of graduating beyond cranky "fringe" political status and who can therefore afford the luxury of treating television as if it did not exist"*.

As part of its continuing internal organisational upgrade, Nick Griffin advocates that the BNP needs to move away from the tendency to think in terms of geographical branches and groups and adopt a "Tasks not Towns" approach using modern communications. Griffin talks of "teams" working to expand the scope and sophistication of the party's organisational machine and "circles" which will *"assist with work to improve the party's image and rates of recruitment, by developing and exploiting parallels between nationalist policies and the concerns of specific groups of people, identified by common denominators other than geographical location"*. Examples of these teams include the Media Monitoring Group, Intertel Team and the Merchandising Team. The Media Monitoring Unit already appears to be having some success by responding quickly to any media coverage of the BNP and insisting on a right to reply which usually gives at least some of their views an airing. In terms of circles more general issues are tackled including Agricultural & rural matters; anti-EU campaigning; youth movement and parents & families. The idea of these circles is that they should be semi-autonomous to the party proper, fulfilling an outreach and induction function.

Despite occasional forays into completely barking land, it has to be said that the new found "realism" and ambition of the BNP is very much in evidence throughout their publications. Back in August, old time NFER Paul Tinsley attributed the

growth in morale and optimism in the Party to its more mature approach, asking the question "Has British Nationalism come of age?" and comparing the present approach to that of the 70's and 80's. Whilst the BNP's stance on race "remains completely unchanged" the presentation is different. Hostility to other races isn't even on the agenda (!) and the emphasis is on white survival not white supremacy.

At the same time in the glossy Patriot magazine Tony Lecomber, who personally exemplifies the shift in tactics, reasons that *"undisguised fascism is never going to come to power except in the most extraordinary circumstances. For this reason the nationalism of Fini's National Alliance and Le Pen's Front National are far more attractive because they present nationalist politics in a non-threatening form. It is for this reason that any hint of "fascism" has been abandoned by both these parties whilst simultaneously retaining a broad nationalist stance. And it is for this reason that both parties have achieved the degree of success they have. Clearly, nationalism does not equal fascism. Or, at least, it doesn't have to"*.

The BNP is repositioning itself and in some cases we probably have to be thankful that their past is such a burden to them, because otherwise they are probably putting out more socialist (albeit national socialist) propaganda than the whole sorry Left put together. Witness the following statement on a leaflet aimed at a Welsh audience "With Bevan and his fellow idealistic socialists all dead the only defence ordinary workers have now against the exploitation and uncertainty caused by globalisation is nationalism".

When you look at the monthly reports of activity in Spearhead the list of subjects and areas where the BNP is putting out propaganda is sobering: anti-Euro "Save our Sterling" leaflets; "Whos' Culling Britain's Farmers" leaflets; unwanted building developments in Gloucestershire; closure of middle schools in Bradford; Scottish BNP members and supporters of Land &

People demonstrating outside home of Bookers Foods director; demonstrating against George Soros; South Birmingham BNP distributing leaflets warning about two con-artists preying on pensioners; anti-paedophile leafleting in the Mansfield and Ashfield area outside schools. If readers think "so what, no-one is going to listen to them", think again. The anti-paedophile leaflets apparently got a positive response from parents, and when teachers appeared on the scene to have a go at the BNP on the basis of their demonised image. Telling parents concerned about real or imagined threats to their kids that they shouldn't listen to someone, "because he's a fascist", is not going to work.

Alongside this grass roots activity (which no one else can claim to be rivalling at the moment) there is the upcoming European elections in June. As Nick Griffin stated in October *"Realistically, the media demonisation of the BNP as "neo-nazi" is still so effective, and the anti-EU vote is likely to be so fragmented between us, UKIP and various independents that we are unlikely to win a seat"*. But the real prize for the BNP is the national TV broadcast and 20 million leaflets delivered free by the Post Office. *"This will enable us to target places such as new towns with a substantial "white flight" element in their populations, as well as hitting areas, which, despite having great potential, have never received a nationalist leaflet before"*.

Barnaby Ore from London and Mark Matthews from Coventry are talking about setting up a BNP Youth Wing on the lines of the French FNJ and the German DVU after the Euro-elections. Ore stresses that its purpose is not to seek *"deliberate confrontation with the Far Left, for to do so would only help them to pull back their support which is otherwise fading away...."*. But it is clear that he sees it as a force in waiting and does anticipate a return to street confrontation in the future: *"victory will only be realised by a unified approach by both the suited and the booted"*. But for the meantime the French model is to be followed - suits and pearl rinses to the front, boots and coshes biding their time in the rear.

The worst mistake we can make is to assume that "biding their time" means "packed up and gone home". The BNP is more active now than it has ever been. And if it can persuade enough people that it does address their concerns (and no-one else does) and that all that swastika waving is a thing of the past then as Paul Tinsley puts it: *"For any liberal readers out there, mark my words, this is your worst nightmare come true"*.

# RACE ATTACKS

## Time for Action

In December 1998 Anti-Fascist Action was invited to participate in a seminar on race attacks, held in east London. Along with youth and community workers, academics and local campaigns, the meeting was very constructive and illustrated the growing concern that official anti-racist strategies are not working. The following article was AFA's opening contribution to the discussion.

"Our involvement here revolves around a number of long standing concerns: (a) that race attacks are at an all time high and rising (up another 6% nationally in British Crime Survey figures this year), (b) that the Far Right are positioning themselves to take full advantage of Labour's abandonment of the working class, (c) that current race strategies aid and abet in dividing society on racial lines, (d) the BNP's change of strategy puts their destiny in their own hands.

Today we live in a country whose citizens believe it to be scrupulously fair but where one in three openly admit to being racist, where the level and intensity of race attacks has been likened to political terrorism, and whose youth has been judged the most reactionary in Western Europe, a country where the disproportionate numbers of ethnic minorities that die in police custody has been condemned by the United Nations and where electoral support for the Far Right, (despite standing less candidates) has risen by over 1000%. Add to this the reality of Social Democrats attacking their former constituency and the orthodox Left collapsing of its own accord, and you have we believe, all the trace elements required of a doomsday scenario.

Prior to the Lawrence inquiry, each of these facts might on its own have been regarded as an aberration, rather than as part of a general rightward drift. Prior to the Lawrence inquiry, the commonly held assumptions were that racism and fascism were all but extinct in this country at least, and we had multi-culturalism to thank for it. Unlike others in Europe, we in Britain had addressed the problem with sufficient vigour, resulting in a society at ease with itself, ran the argument.

Sections of the liberal media even sought to lecture, and draw comparison with our European neighbours France, Germany, Italy and Austria where the genie is well and truly out of the bottle. If nothing else the Lawrence inquiry has hopefully shattered that smug complacency. All available studies and statistics show that racism is very much alive. Race attacks, probably the most reliable barometer are on a par with Germany where the Far Right are again marching in their tens of thousands and have just recently entered regional government.

When addressing the issue of race attacks the Home Office suggested that the new legislation would "send a message to the likes of Combat 18." In a way that comment shows how badly the Establishment and their advisers have got it wrong. The suspects in the Lawrence case, as in the vast majority of cases are not card-carrying members of Far Right parties. The Far Right are not a cause of the rise in race attacks, but do hope, and are determined to be the main political beneficiaries. These days more symptom than cause, it was in fact an attack on a white youth, John Stoner, in the early 1990's that encouraged the BNP to raise the cry of 'Rights for Whites', and from the same platform it rose to become in a short space of time the pre-eminent fascist party.

The BNP now regularly condemn race attacks, from a white viewpoint of course, but also generally; making political capital from linking the growth to the reality of races living cheek by jowl. The prospect of legislation that would seek to discriminate on sentencing on issues related to race, as proposed by the government, will have them rubbing their hands in glee, as confirmation of an 'institutional unfairness' against the white working class. Next time round when the battle cry 'Rights for Whites' is raised it may well resonate not only in Bethnal Green, but in the political mainstream as has already happened elsewhere in Europe.

Additionally no matter how well shaped, further legislation cannot hope to deal positively with the problem. Race attacks are at heart politically motivated. As

militant anti-fascists we firmly believe the issue needs to be urgently addressed but it will take anti-racist policy itself to be redefined to do so effectively.

As for the question of 'unfairness' this is more than a perception. Indeed it often appears that councils go out of their way to suggest a greater degree of bias at a policy level than might actually be the case. Prior to the Lawrence murder, another black youth Rolan Adams was stabbed to death in the same area of south-east London. The trigger that time was the deliberate closing of a local youth club used predominantly by white kids, and the simultaneous opening of another nearby designed intentionally to be used predominantly by black kids. Rolan was killed coming from there.

Undaunted, only months later Camden Council closed a 'white youth club' and simultaneously opened one intended for the exclusive use of Asian youth. The combination saw racial tension instantly increase one hundred fold. On both occasions the BNP, responded to the invitation to intervene. Once again the tension eventually led to murder, this time of a white kid Richard Everitt.

In both examples, it was the Labour councils rather than the Far Right who quite deliberately racialised the situation. The latter merely sought to interpret and exploit the opportunity. And it was of course the responsibility of anti-fascism to clear up the mess.

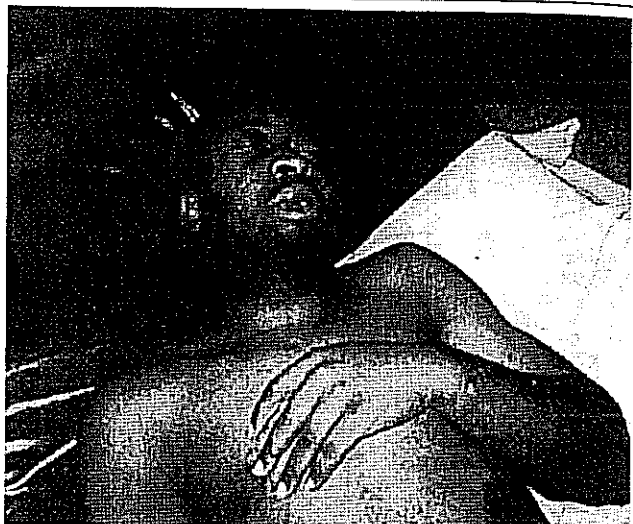
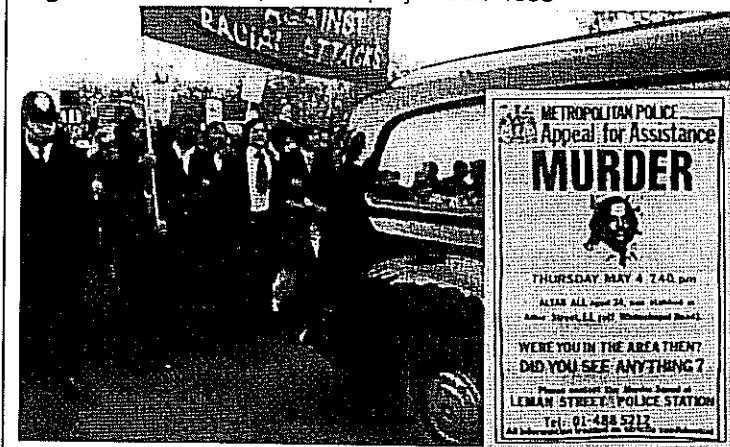
A month ago, on Nov 17th (1998), in a reference to an independent inquiry into the running of Tower Hamlets, an Evening Standard editorial commented: "Amongst the welter of serious allegations, racism is the most disturbing. It takes some doing to be suspected of being anti-Bengali by the Bengali residents

## ANALYSIS

### Racist Attacks: 20 Years On - No Progress

Below left: the funeral of Altab Ali, murdered by racists 1978

Right: Simon Ndekwe, beaten up by racists 1998



and anti-white by the whites, but the council seems to have managed it. No doubt it will claim that it is the councillors' attempts to be even handed that have led to the criticisms from both sides, but the form of the complaints suggests that it is more a matter of bias - or worse - in one direction or the other."

Once again council policy, in the name of anti-racism presumably, appears to be pro-actively engaged in pitting communities against each other. From this and other evidence, it is now our belief that the flaw is systemic. While the damage to inter-community relationships and the cause of anti-racism/anti-fascism is often irreparable.

Fascists are made not born, and in all of this the Far Right are positioning themselves in formally socialist terrain as champions of the underdog. For them of course the dogs are all the one colour. That they succeeded in getting just under 10,000 votes in just three constituencies in this part of east London in May 1997 shows a resonance for their ideas not electorally evident since the mid 1970's. That in May next year they expect to have between 6 to 10 million leaflets delivered free door to door, courtesy of putting up candidates to the tune of £50,000 shows the extent of their ambition.

This new found confidence is a result of both a continuing deterioration among the Left generally, and is complimented by their abandonment in 1994 of the 'marches, meetings, punch ups' strategy in vogue since the 1970's. The upshot is that by and large their political destiny is for the first time in their own hands, in that their strategy now is not to seek out conflict with their opponents, but to take strenuous steps to avoid it.

The incentive for British fascism to jettison the once cherished profile of a 'party of strength' was two-fold. First, their wish to emulate the success of the

Euro-Nationalist strategy on the continent, which in effect means 'putting votes before principles in order to attain the power to put principles into practice'. Second, a recognition that in the largely clandestine war of attrition between Left and Right they were the heavy losers. In political terms they found themselves in a hatchet fight without a hatchet.

In that the most serious damage on a national level, particularly between 1990 and 1994, was not only to public image or their ability to recruit, but to their infrastructure; their cadre. Inevitably targets for the opposition, and invariably 'head first in' they were all too often carried feet first out, and eventually lost to the Party.

Recently a leading strategist explained the mindset: "Since the opposition actively seek confrontation, it follows that we must continue with the policy of avoiding it wherever possible, putting our efforts into grassroots campaigning rather than high profile public activities announced long enough in advance to allow our opponents to mobilise against them. If AFA can be 'persuaded' to leave our candidates, canvassers and leafletters alone that is all we need to win".

According to the current BNP leadership the difference between winning and losing now is assiduously avoiding rather than seeking out confrontation. That this change of strategy is being rigorously implemented means that for the moment militant anti-fascism has been out flanked. It is precisely because it is unable to lay a glove on them that they are gradually building an infrastructure and electoral expertise virtually unhindered. This in time, they believe, will allow them to compete on a level playing field in terms of resources and expertise with the major parties, beginning with selected by-elections. This ability combined with the

other ingredients will, they consider, complete the 'normalisation' of their position within the political mainstream.

All importantly, mainstream success is dependent not so much on their ability to painstakingly create an audience, but to draw instead from the vast reservoir of reaction whose existence is acknowledged by both sides, but is so far largely untapped. As we see it the counter-strategy designed specifically to drain off this reservoir must be two pronged.

Race attacks are the sea in which the Far Right swim. It is self evident that the ad-hoc race attacker of today, given the opportunity, will become the organised fascist of tomorrow. Consequently we consider that the cutting edge of an effective counter-strategy at this juncture would be a broad-based and national anti-race attacks campaign, designed both to politically highlight the hidden epidemic, and reverse the isolation between victim and perpetrator at a grassroots level.

Clearly, this process of 'draining off' can only be successful if, and when, other government sponsored race initiatives are encouraged to consider how they might inadvertently be 'feeding in'.

Since the early 1960s across Europe, by appropriating the arguments of the Left, fascism has astutely been exploiting the right to maintain racial and cultural differences, to the extent that the concept of race as the only, or primary, dynamic in a multi-cultural society cannot any longer be left unchallenged. The political situation demands that in the name of anti-racism that premise is confronted head on, and now is the time to do it.

Otherwise, as Machiavelli noted, "political disorders can be quickly healed if seen in advance, when for lack of a diagnosis they are allowed to grow in such a way that everyone can recognise them, remedies are too late."



# RACE ATTACKS

## Not Black and White

**W**hen Michael Mansfield QC announced the setting up of a Civil Rights Movement after the Stephen Lawrence enquiry it presented anti-fascists with a challenge. If the Far Right could capitalise on the growing level of race attacks it would give them a major boost and so any movement set up to deal with the issue will have an impact, one way or the other, on the anti-fascist movement. AFA has been discussing the possibility of launching a new initiative around race attacks for some time (see previous article), and the new Civil Rights Movement has forced the pace. Below we reprint a copy of the leaflet London AFA distributed at the founding conference.

In Britain the Far Right have been forced, through physical confrontation, onto the margins of society. As we all know, conditions are very different in the rest of Europe. Here the absence of an electoral profile for the Far Right has allowed government, media, race relations and political circles to regard race attacks as no more than another form of anti-social behaviour. The Stephen Lawrence inquiry has highlighted the limitations of the analysis and calls for a more fundamental review of racism in society.

Race attacks are at an all time high. Estimates based on British Crime Survey figures, put racially motivated incidents at between 2,500 and 3,000 a week and rising. The recent Joseph Rowntree report suggests that this figure needs to be adjusted upwards due to even greater levels of under-reporting than previously feared. Moreover, it is clear that racist violence has been on a steadily rising curve since 1982.

### THE FAR RIGHT, MORE SYMPTOM THAN CAUSE?

It should be noted with concern that Britain now has a race attack record on par with Germany, where membership of the Far Right is numbered in tens of thousands, and where fascist parties recently entered regional government. In the past the growth in racial incidents may often have had a relationship to Far

**If you found yourself in a country**  
**whose citizens believe it to be scrupulously fair; but**  
**where one in three are openly racist; where the level**  
**and intensity of race attacks has been likened**  
**to political terrorism and whose youth is**  
**judged the most reactionary in**  
**Western Europe; a country where the**  
**disproportionate numbers of ethnic**  
**minorities that die in police**  
**custody has been condemned by**  
**the United Nations, and where**  
**political support for far-right**  
**parties has risen by 1,000%**  
**how might you respond?**

**YOU ARE**  
**HERE!**

Right activity in the area. Today, it is quite incorrect to lay the blame for race attacks with the relevant fringe groups such as Combat 18.

The BNP have sought to break their forced isolation by shifting towards more electoral models, learning from their European counterparts. With their call for 'Rights For Whites' they have presented themselves as the champions

of the white working class feeding off the *racialisation* of working class community problems.

This tactical retreat by the BNP has taken them out of the headlines. They are much less visible to those who don't live in their target communities and their new direction is less newsworthy. In the BNP's own words from 1994: "No more meetings, marches, punch-ups".

## ANALYSIS

Between 1982 and 1998 despite having stood fewer candidates, the Far Right's number of votes rose by roughly one thousand per cent. Now the BNP, which claims a thirty five per cent growth in membership in 1998 alone, intends to distribute recruitment propaganda to an estimated twenty million people as part of its European election campaign in June 1999.

So while the BNP are working hard to position themselves to benefit from the current racial tensions they remain as much symptom as cause.

### SO WHAT IS REALLY GOING WRONG?

Despite good intentions, current equal opportunities practice contributes to the deepening racist climate in the country. The orthodox equal opportunity approach is individually focused and morally based. It sees racism as an individual problem or set of flawed personal beliefs.

Crucially, it falsely assumes that there is a uniform access to power by all whites and uniform denial of access to power to all blacks. The resulting strategies: anti-racist training, education for young people and advertising campaigns have been rigorously applied. The clear problem is that despite being reached by this model, people's views are not being altered for the better. Instead, many only learn to express racist views where they feel 'safe'.

This doesn't bridge the divides within society, it just builds a wall of silence. The fact that banning racist language in the home is even being discussed is a clear indication that orthodox equal opportunities models have failed to marshal widespread support.

A failure in anti-racist training and education fails all in society. It presents simplistic and patronising identities of many black people (what has been described as the "samosas, saris and steel drum" approach) while many white people are left feeling that a celebration of cultural diversity means any culture other than their own. This situation has been exacerbated by the significant cuts in youth and community services which have resulted in reduced activities and opportunities, particularly in inner city areas. This all allows the BNP to step in and offer a racist identity to the 'cultureless' white working class. So much for fostering better community relations!

The main problem with the orthodox approach is that it over simplifies the problem and divides local communities into 'perpetrators' and 'victims'. This portrays white people, particularly the working class, as inherently racist;

resulting in policy that all too often racialises very real social problems: housing, education, access to council services, lack of meaningful political representation, etc.

The genuine grievances about social inequalities, which the white working class share with many of their black working class counterparts, are dismissed through a fear of pandering to the 'perpetrator' community. In a society where the gap between rich and poor grows ever wider, a policy of redistributing the limited resources available to working class communities on ethnic grounds, can only set the most impoverished against each other.

Racists are not born, they are made. Race attacks are the extreme outcome of this process. Race attacks have become part of a systematic attempt in some areas to make them, or to keep them, 'white'.

As such this race attack epidemic has more in common with political terrorism than street crime. In all areas of policy and practice the government is calling for work to be evidence-based. The vigorous application of orthodox equal opportunities through the Town Halls, should have loosened the grip of racism on each successive generation. On the contrary, according to research in South East London, racist attitudes in school children are more extreme than those held by their parents.

In any other field, such a systematic failure would have led to a questioning of both policy and practice. The race relations industry prevents the necessary debate on its work by accusing its critics of racism. It is vital that such a response must not be allowed to dominate the future Civil Rights Movement.

### DOES THE ANSWER LIE WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM?

Despite the total failure of the criminal justice system to respond effectively to the murder of Stephen Lawrence, it has been argued that legislation is the solution. There is already a substantial lack of confidence in the police among ethnic minorities. This is based on the dismal clear up rates for racially motivated crime, compounded by the police's ability to only detect a racial element in one in three crimes where a racial

motive is later identified. Against this background the notion of 'additional sentences' is simply a distraction: yet again being focused on the individual rather than tackling a wider political problem. Other than providing mouth watering propaganda for right-wing extremists, it can expect to have no tangible effect.

### SUMMARY

- Orthodox models of equal opportunities racialise social problems in such a way as to set communities against each other.
- Equal opportunities models which assume that there is a uniform access to power by all whites and a uniform denial of access to power to all blacks must be rejected.
- Anti-racist strategies that are not broadly accepted as reasonable and rational by working class communities (both black and white) are counter productive and deflect attempts to tackle extreme racism.
- The impact of systematic cuts in youth and community provision and its relationship with the rise of racial tension should be seen as a straightforward case of cause and effect.
- The race attack epidemic is a symptom of a wider problem and cannot be solved by additional legislation.
- Race attackers are made not born.
- Organised and systematic racial violence must be addressed from a political rather than criminal perspective.

### PROPOSALS

1. As a matter of urgency the isolation of the victims of race attacks must be reversed through a pro-active, grass roots strategy.
2. All deaths in police custody to be investigated by an independent and accountable body.
3. The Civil Rights Movement should initiate an independent review of current equal opportunities policy and practice in order to support the adoption of an evidence-based approach.



*Hillsborough Families fighting for justice for ten years - they too should be part of the civil rights movement*

# LEVELLING THE SCORE



## The Silence of McCann

**R**epresentatives of Celtic Fans Against Fascism and Anti-Fascist Action recently attended a conference at Celtic Park under the title of The Equality Goal. The conference, attended by more than 200 people, was funded and run by Glasgow City Council, The Ethnic Business Forum and Celtic Football Club.

The main thrust of the invited speakers was to highlight the position and experience of blacks and Asians in sport, football in particular. The gathering discussed how best to open up the sports arena as an avenue for social and business integration of the black and Asian communities.

The purpose of the CFAF and AFA members attending the conference, however, was to take this rare opportunity allowed to us to question Celtic's Managing Director, Fergus McCann, in an open forum on the club's apparent silence on the sectarian murder by Loyalists of 16-year old Celtic supporter Mark Scott and the subsequent attempted murder of Irish Celtic fan, Sean O'Connor, in the same area.

We wanted to ask Fergus in light of Celtic's much vaunted Bhoys Against Bigotry campaign, why the club has maintained an undignified silence on these and other attacks upon Celtic

supporters. With all the publicity sought and received by Bhoys Against Bigotry we wanted to ask whether this campaign was not in itself a political attack upon our own fans (albeit a less violent attack than that of the Loyalists) and upon the history, culture and traditions of Celtic.



Paul Elliot and the evil gnome McCann

Bhoys Against Bigotry has so far only concentrated on a narrow definition of bigotry (defined by Fergus McCann himself) which has actually been divisive and unnecessary. The bigots according to McCann are those Celtic fans who celebrate their Irish Republican political leanings by singing rebel songs inside the ground. This tradition goes as far back as the earliest days of a club which was founded by Irish Nationalists and supporters of the Fenian Movement. Irish Republican supporters of Celtic have been among the most progressive political elements at the club. It is amongst this group of Celtic supporters that you will find the biggest support for anti-sectarianism, anti-racism and anti-fascism. McCann has for most of his five years in office made it something of a personal crusade to antagonise, provoke and isolate this large section of Celtic supporters.

When our delegation arrived at the Equality Goal conference, Mr McCann was in attendance, posing for press photos with the organisers and speakers. He was billed to speak himself, however he looked decidedly uncomfortable on seeing us and within minutes it was announced by Celtic's public relations officer, Peter McLennan, that Mr McCann had suddenly and mysteriously been taken ill and would not now address the conference. I wonder if it was anything to do with us being there?!

There is no doubt that our presence had been noted by Celtic's staff. On arriving we had asked the organisers if we could distribute our leaflet which detailed the sectarian attacks upon our supporters by Loyalist bigots from Bridgeton. We were advised that all literature from attending organisations was to be put on the stall at the entrance to the meeting room. The stall contained various leaflets from participating groups; Kick It Out, Football Unites - Racism Divides etc. We duly put our pile of leaflets on the table next to



### RED ATTITUDE

Anti-fascist Man. Utd fanzine

£1.20 UK  
£1.60 overseas

Available from:

Red Attitude  
PO Box 83  
SWDO  
Manchester M15 5NJ

(cheques payable to "Red Attitude")



### TIOCFAIDH AR LA!

Anti-fascist Celtic magazine

£1.00 U.K.  
or £5 for 4 issues  
£8.00 overseas

Available from:  
TAL

BM BOX 266  
LONDON WC1N 3XX

(cheques payable to "TAL")



### WELL PREPARED

Anti-fascist Aston Villa fanzine

£1.00 U.K.  
or £5 for 4 issues  
£8.00 overseas

Available from:

WELL PREPARED  
PO Box 3311  
Birmingham  
B13 0RZ

(cheques payable to "Well Prepared")



those of the other anti-racist organisations. However, checking on the table only moments later, we found that some enterprising member of Celtic's staff had removed our leaflets from the stall and threw them in a nearby bin. So much for equality!

The conference was addressed by various speakers including Paul Elliot, the ex-Celtic and Chelsea defender, who gave a potted history of his time in the game. He spoke of his own experience of racism both on and off the park, and the changing level of abuse throughout his career at various clubs.

Elliot spoke of the first time when, as a professional player, he was racially abused by an opponent whilst playing for Charlton. A Burnley player called Bill Hamilton called him a black bastard. Elliot knocked him out and was sent off for his trouble. This story provoked loud applause from the audience, mainly made up of businessmen, until they were reminded later by the chair that violence was not the answer.

The next speaker was a late substitute for Fergus McCann, Peter McLennan, Celtic's chief spin doctor, who had graciously stepped in when his boss had suddenly been struck down. He gave us the McCann line on Bhoys Against Bigotry and how the campaign had silenced the rabble (the Celtic fans) from singing any songs which the club deemed as bigoted, and he boasted how supporters had been banned for life from the ground for wearing scarves and carrying flags with overtly Irish political connotations.

When asked by a member of CFAF what action had been taken by the club, in relation to their policy and support for Bhoys Against Bigotry, when the majority of the Rangers team had been captured live on TV in the Celtic dressing room singing the sectarian Orange anthem 'The Sash' after this season's League Cup Final at Celtic Park. To the amusement

of the audience, McLennan stated that no action had or could be taken over this incident in their own stadium as the club had no jurisdiction or control over those involved. Even when extremely bigoted and sectarian behaviour had taken place in front of millions in Celtic's own stadium, the club were unwilling to countenance any action. A blind eye was turned to the behaviour of a team of professional

footballers singing a hate-fuelled anti-Catholic song.

McLennan was then put under pressure to explain why Celtic had remained silent on the sectarian attacks against our supporters. He claimed that he could say nothing on these matters and that, as they were not within the remit of Bhoys Against Bigotry and Celtic, they also could say nothing on the issue. McLennan claimed that the club and its anti-bigotry campaign remained silent because these were police matters.

Bhoys Against Bigotry and Celtic certainly know who to pick a fight with - Loyalist murderers and Rangers players? No thanks, Celtic supporters? Yes please! This attitude seemed to sum up just exactly what the conference was all about - MONEY.

The Equality Goal conference, despite the good intentions of many of those who attended, is seen by Celtic as another weapon in their PR armoury. It was less about equality and more about attracting so far untapped funds from the Asian businessmen in attendance. From Celtic's point of view the best way to do this is to water down the Irish culture which surrounds the club in the hope that the product will become more desirable to potential sponsors, at the expense of the club's supporters.

Peter McLennan was approached at the end of the conference and informed that, contrary to his stated view at the meeting, the Irish Question still hangs over the club and has still not been answered adequately. Whether in song, in print, on scarves or banners it will remain at Celtic Park long after he and his boss are but a distant and unpleasant memory.

Despite the official hostility CFAF were approached at the end of the meeting by a number of people who were sympathetic, including two academics and a deputy headmaster!

## Double Standards

The Celtic Fanzine Tioclaidh Ar La (TAL) has uncovered evidence that suggests that the newly appointed Managing Director of Celtic, Allan MacDonald OBE, has extensive links to the arms trade between British Aerospace (BAe) and brutal regimes like Indonesia where BAe's ground attack aircraft, the Hawk, was used in the massacre of thousands of people in East Timor.

A spokesperson for the TAL fanzine, Louise Cooper, said: "We find it somewhat ironic that Fergus McCann should have spent so much of his time at Celtic lecturing a section of our fans concerning their supposed backing for what Mr. McCann defines as 'terrorism' in Ireland and then goes and chooses as his successor a man whose previous employer is linked to State terror around the world. Celtic fans will see this quite rightly as a case of double standards yet again by Fergus McCann, in an area where big business sees football clubs like Celtic as an easy touch to boost their profits. We should really be looking closely at exactly why football would want these people and their unethical business dealings. What's in it for us as supporters?"

In an interview with Alan Davidson of the Evening Times (16/03/99) MacDonald is described as having a different and more downbeat manner than the abrasive McCann. As Louise Cooper of TAL put it: "MacDonald is being described as affable and amiable in the Scottish press. Considering the nature of the regimes and dictators that British Aerospace deals with around the world, 'billy' might be a more apt description."

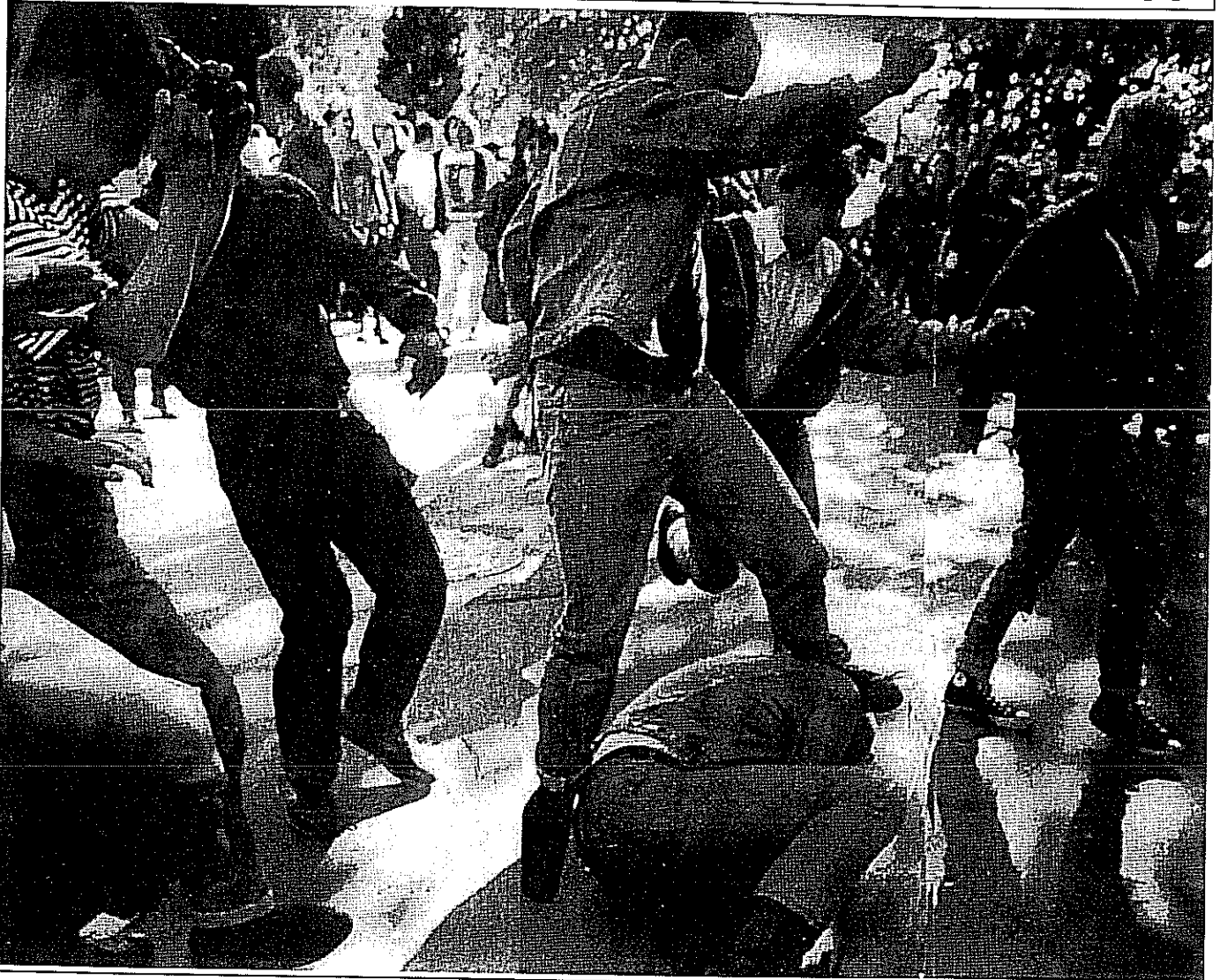
According to the pressure group CAAT (Campaign Against the Arms Trade), British Aerospace is among the top exporters of arms and torture equipment to brutal regimes such as Abu Dhabi, Chile, Indonesia, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

Celtic fans will want to know if the club's new Managing Director was aware of British Aerospace involvement in the sale of arms and torture equipment to the regimes and what part, if any, he played in securing such deals? TAL's Louise Cooper said: "We need to have some standards. Mr McCann has sat in his ivory tower for five years pontificating about Bhoys Against Bigotry and attacking Celtic fans for what he perceives as sectarianism. In the light of this week's appointment of Mr MacDonald as the new MD, perhaps Mr McCann should look a bit more closely at the kind of company he keeps himself."

★ anti-fascist history ★ anti-fascist history ★ anti-fascist history ★

# KEY TO THE FUTURE

## The History & Development of AFA Strategy



One fascist gets a lesson in the reality of "controlling the streets" - Speakers Corner, Hyde Park, May 27th 1989

From the day Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) was founded fourteen years ago, we have always been best known for the use of physical force against fascists on the streets. While being rightly proud of this record the present situation requires that militant anti-fascists develop a political strategy that is just as effective as the physical one has been in the past.

There has never been a blue-print for militant anti-fascism, either political or physical, and AFA has had to develop its

own strategies. As the general political situation changes anti-fascists need to move with the times. In Britain, where the main fascist threat comes from the British National Party (BNP) who have withdrawn from 'street activities', there is a danger that if anti-fascists don't follow the fascists in to the political mainstream then we will be outflanked.

Some anti-fascists think that adopting a political strategy means the physical side of the struggle has been abandoned, but the key to AFA's future success lies in

our original founding statement which commits the organisation to "physical and ideological opposition to the fascists". The physical side of the strategy has been implemented so successfully that the fascists were forced to withdraw from the streets in 1994 - now is the time to develop and implement a political strategy with the same level of enthusiasm and commitment.

To understand the position we are now in it is helpful to look at the history of AFA as it has developed over the years.

★ anti-fascist history ★ anti-fascist history ★ anti-fascist history ★

1977 - 1985

### The beginnings...

Although AFA was formed in the summer of 1985 the roots of the organisation can be traced back to the anti-fascist squads in the late 1970s. The squads were the physical force wing of the Anti Nazi League (ANL) which had been launched in 1977 to counter the growing threat of the National Front (NF).

The NF had made inroads into the white working class, and in 1974 they set up the NF Trade Unionists Association and were actively involved in a number of industrial disputes. This growing support among the white working class led to increased opposition from the Left and the Trade Union movement and when the National Party (a split from the NF) won two council seats in Blackburn, in May 1976, it was clearly time to turn the growing anti-fascist protests into something more dynamic.

By 1977 organised opposition to the NF reached new heights, in particular at Lewisham in south London where an NF march came under heavy and sustained physical attack from several thousand anti-fascists. Shortly after this the Anti Nazi League was formed by the SWP and every fascist activity was now opposed.

The ANL strategy combined imaginative propaganda and physical opposition. Popular bands, sporting celebrities and other individuals with a high profile were used to endorse the anti-fascist message, making sure it had a wider appeal than the usual left-wing campaign. Hundreds of thousands of leaflets were dished out, badges sold, stickers and posters put up. The message was simple but effective; the NF=Nazis. In the 70s this message was still effective, bearing in mind that the Second World War had only ended 30 years previously, and Britain was very much out of step with the rest of Europe where the Far Right were small and isolated and could only dream of reaching the level of support that the NF had. Indeed the French FN sent activists over to Britain to study the methods of the NF which they have subsequently put to good use.

The propaganda on its own would never have been enough, and the ANL squads provided the necessary physical opposition. The previous years had seen the NF pursue a traditional fascist

strategy of trying to control the streets. Left-wing paper sales were attacked, public meetings smashed up and demonstrations harassed. Between 1977 and the general election in 1979 the ANL squads systematically turned the situation around - attacking fascist paper sales, meetings and marches. The damage that was done to the NF at Lewisham was methodically reproduced around the country. The middle classes would no longer turn out in public, women and old people found it increasingly dangerous to attend activities and anti-fascist successes in the street battles drove away many more. The tide had turned and the fascists were starting to become isolated.

Many original members of AFA learnt their 'trade' during this period and saw how the effective combination of mass propaganda, carnivals, stunts, and physical confrontation could be. However the political situation was about to change dramatically as the Tories won the 1979 general election, playing the race card as Thatcher talked about understanding people's fears of being "swamped" by an alien culture; the NF vote collapsed.

The NF split into 3 smaller organisations and entered a period of reorganisation, but anti-fascists remained active. The first problem to be dealt with was the closing down of the ANL, the only active anti-fascist organisation. The ANL's main sponsors, the SWP, had themselves entered a period of reorganisation and started to close down all the campaigns they had launched which had succeeded in drawing in significant numbers of working class people, like the ANL.

With regard to the ANL, the SWP's argument was that now that the NF vote had collapsed and the organisation disintegrated, the Tories were the real enemy. The squads were to be disbanded and the organisers, many of them SWP full-timers, were withdrawn. The only problem was that many of the activists refused to go. Although the NF was in decline the fascists were still active, and now that their electoral prospects had disappeared there was a new intensity to their violent attacks on the 'opposition'. Apart from attacking political opponents they also maintained high profile paper sales at places like Brick Lane and Chapel Market (in London), held demonstrations, recruited among the disillusioned young working class at football grounds and

around the punk/Oi/ska music scene. As well as maintaining this high level of activity they provided the political justification and motivation for the rapidly increasing level of racist attacks.

This provided the 'squadists' with the necessary reasons for keeping up the momentum that had been built in the anti-fascist movement. The fascist gangs could be confronted and beaten and the squads were able to attract working class support. The importance of challenging the racists and fascists in working class areas should not be underestimated, and when the middle class leadership of the ANL / SWP, with absolutely no understanding of the situation on the ground, decided to expel the 'squadists' in 1981, the future became much clearer. The so-called 'squadists' were never just 'streetfighters' and had always had wider political ambitions and becoming independent of the conservative Left started the process of challenging the traditional left-wing blueprint of how to achieve progressive social change which now sees AFA in the forefront of a new attempt to build a genuine, independent working class movement.

The early 1980s was a period of intense anti-fascist activity, without the media coverage of the late 70s and involving smaller numbers. Nevertheless, the battle for the streets was still being fought. The ANL still existed in name up to 1982, but the occasional activity they called would simply be a protest march on the other side of town from the fascists. While this sort of non-confrontational activity had no effect on the fascists, it also failed to attract anyone else to the anti-fascist movement.

Increasingly, independent groups of anti-fascists were taking the initiative, with solid bases in Manchester, Hatfield and London. In Manchester 8 anti-fascists were jailed in 1981 for taking a firm line on fascist intimidation while in London a year-long campaign saw the NF driven off their prestigious sales pitch at Chapel Market (see Fighting Talk 19 for the full story). Hatfield, a small town north of London, was an example of how anti-fascists, based in the community, could win popular support for their views and when the ska band Madness played there in 1980 a large contingent of fascist skinheads who had travelled up from London were severely beaten by the locals who turned out in force.

At this time there were also high profile campaigns in support of young Asians in Bradford and Newham who had been arrested for defending themselves and their communities from racist attacks. Although there was no national co-ordination there was militant opposition to the racists and fascists. This increased level of militancy inevitably led to growing police interest in those responsible, causing further problems for anti-fascists who were in danger of being isolated and picked off.

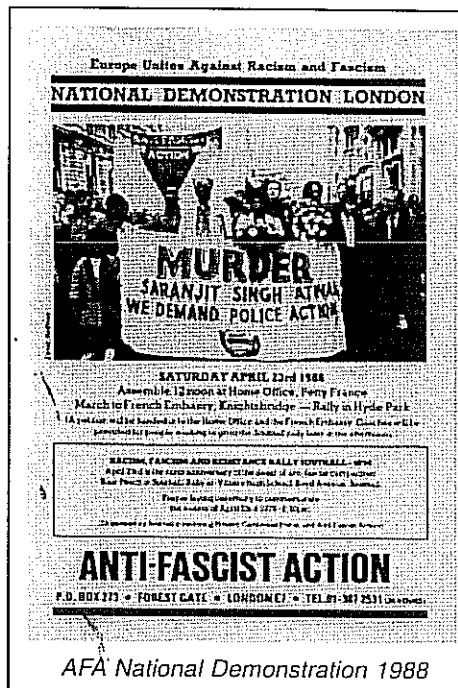
While militant anti-fascists were having increased success on the streets there was no political strategy running alongside that would have allowed them to fill the political vacuum that was being created with the removal of the fascists. Getting rid of the fascists seemed sufficient. After the 'squadists' were expelled from the SWP in 1981 a decision was taken to form a new organisation in order to stay politically active. This group was Red Action and was the link between the anti-fascist activists in Manchester, London and Hatfield. Militant anti-fascism was consistently promoted in the Red Action paper and not surprisingly it was Red Action who, out of practical necessity, were soon to initiate the launching of a new, national anti-fascist organisation.

### 1985 - 1989 AFA's Early Years

As the fascists started to reorganise (the BNP was launched in 1982) and with racist attacks increasing, it became clear that anti-fascism needed to be put back on a wider agenda and a new national organisation was required. One incident in particular led to its formation. In 1984 the Greater London Council organised a large open-air rally and concert as part of their campaign against unemployment. Halfway through a group of 70 or 80 fascists appeared and attacked the audience and the bands on stage. Initially taken by surprise anti-fascists quickly reorganised and drove the fascists off. A retaliatory attack was launched on a fascist pub that evening to make up for the earlier lack of preparedness. The point was that the fascists were getting bolder, attacking large left-wing activities in broad daylight, and Red Action decided this had to be dealt with. A leaflet was drawn up and circulated to anyone interested and as a result of this discussions took place with a variety of groups about launching

a new anti-fascist organisation. A conference was called in the summer of 1985 and attended by 300 people representing a wide range of groups.

The militants, represented by groups like Red Action and the East London Direct Action Movement, made a crucial mistake at this conference because although it was their initiative, acting on information received that the fascists would attack the meeting, they spent the whole meeting outside on stewarding duties. This meant that from the very outset the political orientation was being dictated by others. Political naivety



played a part as well, the militants wrongly assuming that regardless of what was decided in meetings everything could be rectified on the streets, and when the fascists were themselves ambushed after the meeting this seemed to underline the point. Despite this error, which wouldn't be resolved until the relaunch in 1989, the new organisation quickly set about achieving some important results.

The first activity took place in November 1985 when AFA took over the assembly point for the annual NF Remembrance Day parade. These parades were an important part of the fascists' activities attracting several thousand at their height, providing an annual focal point for their supporters and frequently gaining media coverage. On this occasion the fascist stewards were

unable to remove AFA and the NF march had to assemble elsewhere and was delayed for an hour. Not that dramatic but a signal of intent for the future.

It is worth looking at the Remembrance Day marches over the next few years because they illustrate the differences within AFA. Although the larger left-wing organisations did not join AFA (eg. SWP, Militant, Communist Party, etc.) it was made up of some smaller socialist and anarchist groups, various groups active within the race relations lobby like the Newham Monitoring Project and the Refugee Forum, Searchlight, and non-aligned individuals. It ranged from militant anti-fascists who had seen the effect of physical confrontation on the fascists to groups who wanted to put pressure on the government to change various laws and fund particular projects.

Initially the contrasting agendas worked together and when AFA called a National Demonstration on Remembrance Day 1986 over 2,000 people responded, making it the biggest anti-fascist mobilisation since the 70s. It made the front page of the Daily Mail on the Monday morning which was a significant step in putting anti-fascism back on the agenda. The struggle between fascists and anti-fascists, fought on the streets around the country since the collapse of the ANL, had been almost completely ignored up to this point.

The following year another march was called, basically because the previous one had been so successful and after the NF march a large contingent of fascists would make their way to Trafalgar Square to attack the Non-Stop Anti-Apartheid picket outside South Africa House. The AFA march was a way of getting a large number of anti-fascists into the area to confront the NF, which was successfully achieved.

By 1988 there was an argument about a third march; around the question of what was the point of having the march. The march was getting smaller, the media had lost interest, and it was becoming an annual event with no discussion about its effectiveness. The militants were keen to oppose the NF on Remembrance Day but felt a march wasn't the best way. In the interests of 'unity' the militants went along with the march again, and scored another notable success against the fascists afterwards.

By 1989 the Remembrance Day march caused a split. The liberals called a march which attracted less than 300 (compared to 2,000 in 1986) while the militants took over the fascists' assembly point and controlled much of the surrounding area. A number of fascists were prevented from reaching their march and the NF were seriously delayed. Such was the pressure they were under, coupled with the defeats they had suffered in Trafalgar Square over the previous 2 years, that for the first time the NF didn't try to attack the anti-apartheid picket afterwards, presumably relieved just to get out of the area in one piece.

For the militants this episode highlighted a key component of anti-fascism - to be effective. There is no blueprint but any mobilisation must have a specific purpose. While the liberal agenda called for protests against fascist violence, for more police involvement, and for the State to deal with the problem of a growing Far Right, the militants were developing a strategy that would stop the fascists being able to operate openly and challenge them in the constituency they had most success in - the white working class. Rather than appealing to the victims of fascism the militant strategy was aimed at the potential recruits.

The first 4 years of AFA's existence weren't negative, the decline of the NF Remembrance Day parade being one example of AFA's success. In 1986 an NF march in Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk was so thoroughly disrupted that the then NF leader Nick Griffin (now a senior BNP figure) actually stopped holding demonstrations altogether.

Another area of fascist activity was the NF's White Noise Club, set up to promote fascist bands, but 'financial mismanagement' soon saw the bands break away from the NF to set up their own Blood and Honour organisation (B&H). By 1988 they had established themselves in London's West End, getting 2 shops just off Carnaby Street to stock their merchandise and using local pubs as meeting places. At this time the European situation was changing rapidly with the Far Right gaining support in many countries. In Europe the fascist skinhead scene was an integral part of these moves and many European delegations arrived in Carnaby Street to meet Skrewdriver and B&H supremo Ian Stuart.

AFA set up Cable Street Beat (CSB) in 1988 to address the problem of B&H and of fascists attacking gigs by bands they considered a problem - the Pogues (Irish), Desmond Dekker (black) and the Upstarts (socialist). Some high profile gigs were organised and got national media coverage which allowed AFA/CSB to highlight the growing problem of fascism at home and abroad, and to promote a strategy to deal with it - no platform.

The key date in the campaign against B&H was 27th May 1989. The fascists had booked Camden Town Hall for a thousand strong rally, which at £10 a head would raise a fair bit of money. AFA discovered the venue and got it banned, despite opposition from Searchlight who wanted to monitor the event, and called a counter-demonstration at the fascists redirection point, Speakers Corner. Hundreds of fascists were attacked and chased off and never made it to the rearranged gig in Kent, and later that evening one of the fascist shops was attacked and ransacked. So on one day B&H's boast of being in control was cruelly exposed to an international audience and the last of their shops was forced to close down. Shortly afterwards Ian Stuart moved to the Midlands. Their efforts to operate openly and move into the mainstream had been defeated.

The other important point about 27th May was the hundreds of anti-fascists who rallied to AFA's call to confront the boneheads. This highlighted another internal problem which was having an organisation but no structure that could accommodate activists. AFA had been 'run' by individuals who represented only themselves. This meant that in London, for example, half a dozen individuals could outvote the 2 Red Action delegates who represented 100+ stewards!

Apart from the lack of democracy there were other hostile agendas at work, and at the very first national conference in 1986 a Searchlight-led anti-anarchist smear campaign was launched which led to Class War being suspended and all the other anarchist groups and Red Action walking out in solidarity. Red Action returned later to prevent the initiative being lost altogether. The following year there was an attempt to get Red Action expelled on a host of trumped up charges. These were defeated but clearly signalled that there was a fight on for the future direction and

effectiveness of anti-fascism. The 1987 conference also saw a proposed name change for the organisation, from AFA to Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Action (ARAFA). The significance of this was that it was an attempt to change AFA from having a very practical, sometimes physical, strategy designed to fight fascism that was meeting with growing success to a more conservative lobbying group, grant-funded and establishment friendly. This strategy is still familiar today, one of putting race above class. This move was also defeated.

By 1989 these internal disagreements had come to a head over the Remembrance Day march and the good response to the May 27th mobilisation showed there was a receptive audience for militant anti-fascism. London AFA called a conference and relaunched itself around the original founding statement with the additional point that we were not fighting fascism to maintain the status quo but from a pro-working class position. On this basis the anarcho-syndicalist Direct Action Movement (DAM) rejoined (after the Class War walkout) along with the Trotskyist Workers Power. The liberals withdrew.

So with Red Action, the DAM, Workers Power and non-aligned individuals AFA started to reorganise. Branches were set up to accommodate activists and a structure implemented that meant AFA was run from the bottom up; in other words controlled by the activists. AFA was now democratic and had an agreed strategy.

While the Left spent most of the 80s failing to 'kick out the Tories' the militants in AFA recognised that it was the Far Right who had the potential to recruit in the white working class. The first step in trying to build any progressive working class movement was to remove the fascist influence from these areas. Only then, once the space was created, could the Left fill the vacuum. The Left's failure to prevent the fascists from physically dominating them meant that anti-fascism assumed a key role.

The early AFA years had succeeded in getting anti-fascism onto a wider agenda and as the Far Right started to grow in this country and especially Europe it was an important achievement. This period had also shown that it was not possible to have an effective anti-fascist organisation with two contradictory



strategies. The liberal anti-fascist strategy is Anyone But Fascists (ABF), as seen on the Isle of Dogs where a Labour council's corruption and indifference to the local working class population led to the situation where the Far Right, in the absence of any credible left-wing alternative, was able to get a councillor elected in 1993 (the BNP's Derek Beackon).

The ABF response was to campaign vigorously for the Labour Party in the next election, which succeeded in unseating the BNP, but leaves the situation unresolved with Labour back in power who were responsible for the problem in the first place. The militant strategy is more ambitious: create an independent working class alternative to Labour and the BNP. Although this

organised around a militant strategy was in Manchester. Of the other groups the two best known were Tyne and Wear Anti-Fascist Association (funded by the local council) and Leeds, both active but following a Searchlight pro-State agenda.

**1990 onwards**

Almost as soon as AFA had been relaunched the BNP initiated their Rights For Whites campaign (RFW) in 1990. Starting in London's East End when a white boy was stabbed by Asians, it soon spread around the country and focused on the bad conditions experienced by an abandoned white working class. The BNP

meant as a deterrent. The level of fascist violence against AFA was also increasing, with a bomb being thrown into an AFA public meeting in east London in November 1990. (No one was injured.)

The BNP had completely overtaken the NF as the dominant fascist party now and their activities started to cover the whole country. In Scotland they became active focusing on support for Ulster Loyalism rather than the traditional anti-black racism south of the border.

As the temperature increased it was obvious the rest of the Left would become involved. Left-wing paper sales, especially the SWP, were being regularly attacked throughout the country and as the fascists continued to pick up support the Left would suffer if AFA was seen to be the only organised opposition.

Initially AFA's attitude was to approach these groups with a view to co-operation. Although there was no intention of surrendering AFA's independence or strategy it was felt the increased forces available to these groups could, if working to an agreed plan, increase the pressure on the fascists and help to stop the State picking off the militants. AFA's approaches were rejected out of hand by the entire Left.

Despite this, 1991 saw AFA's most ambitious campaign to date being launched in east London, which had been made a national priority by the BNP. 60,000 leaflets were distributed on the estates, work was done with schools and community groups, the Unity Carnival attracted 10,000 people, the fascist paper sale at Brick Lane was put under pressure, the BNP were forced out of local sympathetic pubs and in November 1991 a 4,000-strong AFA demonstration marched through Bethnal Green - the supposed BNP heartland - completely unopposed. Young white Eastenders had seen the 'lefty' stereotype challenged and the BNP turned over, and contact was made with groups of young Asians. As 1991 drew to a close the situation looked promising, but all that was about to change.

The Left did get involved, but not with AFA, and having withdrawn from anti-fascist politics since the 1970s they now

example is more recent, it summarises the contradictions that existed in the 1985-89 period. It is often wrongly assumed that the difference between liberals and militants is simply about the use of physical force, but in AFA's case it was a political difference.

With three national organisations on board it was now planned to expand AFA's field of operations. Although there were other AFA groups around the country the only group outside London

started to work in local areas, dealing with local issues, and by August 1990 they won 25% of the white vote in a local election in the East End. While the electoral strategy showed a level of support for the Far Right, because the BNP held public election rallies and meetings it allowed AFA to play havoc with their organisation on the ground.

In September 1990 3 AFA activists were jailed for a total of 11 years for an attack on a prominent fascist skinhead; clearly

launched their own anti-fascist. Instead of filling the political vacuum they simply tried to duplicate what AFA was doing. The SWP relaunched the ANL, Militant set up Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE), and the Labour Party, Communist Party and black careerists established the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA).

April 1992 saw the national relaunching of AFA which was now vigorously pursuing the strategy particularly in Scotland and the North West. The BNP were very active around Rochdale, Oldham, and Burnley, towns just outside Manchester's fascist - free zone. The success of AFA in disrupting the BNP's efforts can be seen by the response of the police who arrested two AFA organisers the night before a planned activity in Rochdale. They were released without charge once the day was over. The level of confrontation was very high during this period, which included the now famous Battle of Waterloo in September 1992. B&H and the BNP were working fairly closely together at this time and had hoped a successful gig (pre-gig interviews were arranged with the Press on Waterloo Station) would enable B&H to operate openly with all the political and financial advantages this would have created for the fascists. The anti-fascist victory once again put paid to their plans.

AFA had deliberately adopted the single issue approach because when it was relaunched in 1989 around a pro-working class position the political composition of the organisation ranged from Trotskyist to Anarchist, Stalinist to Social Democrat. To keep the necessary unity on the streets for the important battles at the time there had to be an agreement that AFA's role was to create the space for a progressive working class organisation to fill; it wasn't AFA's job to fill it. By the time the BNP had won a council seat in 1993 it was becoming increasingly clear that no one was willing or able to fill the vacuum. This was underlined by the Left's support for Labour in the subsequent election 6 months later which saw the fascists lose

## UNSCREW SKREWDRIVER!



Assemble:  
Saturday 12th September 1992 at 4.30pm  
Waterloo BR  
(Bring a Travelcard)

Anti-Fascist Action  
BM Box 1734  
London WC1N 3XX

their seat. The wheel had turned full circle, the Left had capitulated.

Although the BNP lost their council seat they actually increased their vote by 30%. This continuing electoral success led to a radical change in policy by the BNP, and in April 1994 they called what in effect was a 'cease-fire'. They issued a statement saying that there would be "no more meetings, marches, or punch ups." They would now concentrate on a Euro-Nationalist electoral strategy, hoping to emulate the success of the French FN.

The intensity of this period proved too much for some of the groups in AFA. For some the physical demands proved to be too much, but politically it was

becoming clear that AFA would have to break with the traditional Left and this also caused problems. It was Labour's indifference to the white working class that allowed the BNP to appear as the radical alternative, and yet most of the Left wouldn't break with Labour. Those that did had absolutely no credibility; to illustrate this point the Communist Party of Great Britain (formerly the Leninist) got 1/10th of the BNP's vote when they stood in Tower Hamlets in the 1992 general election.

The situation in London was slightly different from the rest of the country, partly because the BNP felt they could build on the political base they already had without the public activities, and partly because AFA was more established. The battle on the streets continued elsewhere for about a year. After B&H got smashed in London on May 27th 1989, Ian Stuart moved to the Midlands to run the B&H operation from there because the fascists were relatively strong. By 1994 the tide had turned and both east and west Midlands were being fiercely contested with AFA setting its own agenda. In the North West the experienced BNP organiser 'retired' at the beginning of 1995 due to the continual pressure from AFA and later that year the BNP's public activities ceased in Scotland and the Midlands. To some it may seem that the war had been won, but the reality was that the conflict was simply moving into a new arena.

The BNP's change of strategy inevitably meant that AFA needed to adapt to the new situation, but the emergence of Combat 18 (C18) kept the prospect of street confrontation alive. Although it is now clear that C18 were set up by the State, primarily to examine links with Loyalist paramilitaries, there was also an attempt to divert AFA away from addressing the major political issue of the BNP's growth by getting involved in 'gang warfare' with C18. Although they had previously existed as the BNP's stewards group from the outset they were promoted by Searchlight and the media as something new and extremely dangerous.

Something didn't add up. C18 published hit lists and bomb manuals that broke every law possible and yet they were allowed to continue. It was clear the State were pulling the strings and it was



Riot police outside Little Driver pub, East London, after AFA attack on C18. 15/1/94.

also clear that Searchlight and their supporters were heavily involved.

AFA helped discredit the myth of C18 on the ground, in particular by disrupting the Ian Stuart Memorial concert in 1994 (see photo) and a UVF march in Central London in 1996, but the role of Searchlight in promoting them showed a greater allegiance to the State's agenda than the anti-fascist movement.

As pressure on the street forced the BNP to make political adjustments, by 1994 AFA was also making changes. AFA recognised it was a three-cornered fight against the fascists, the State and the conservative Left. The damage that groups like the ANL did to anti-fascism has already been mentioned, but when they started claiming responsibility in their propaganda for AFA victories like Waterloo it was felt they must be publicly attacked. A 4-page leaflet called 'Don't believe the hype' was produced to answer their lies and expose their strategy as being counterproductive. From this point on AFA was quite prepared to attack the conservative Left. In the past AFA had been reluctant to get involved in what were seen as being internal arguments, but the result of this was that AFA was either written out of history or completely misrepresented.

When John Tyndall (BNP leader) stood in an east London by-election in the summer of 1994 AFA produced a leaflet

which took 'anti-fascism' as far as it could go. It described the BNP as being ultra-conservative and showed their policies as being to the right of the Tories. In an area where people don't vote Tory this was the best propaganda AFA could produce, and yet it was becoming increasingly clear that AFA was fighting the fascists with one hand tied behind its back. No progressive working class forces were moving in to fill the political vacuum that existed in working class areas and just being 'anti' BNP was not enough. On top of that the police actually prevented AFA from distributing this leaflet while the BNP were allowed to canvass door to door. Militant anti-fascism was being criminalised.

As the BNP's public activities petered out, where there were clashes the police came down hard on AFA. An AFA mobilisation in Kirkby in the Midlands (April 95) was attacked with extreme force by riot police, one activist's leg being broken in 5 places. In Edinburgh shortly afterwards a plainclothes police squad attacked a small group of AFA activists and only revealed their identity when they started losing. 10 AFA members were arrested.

More recently public AFA activities have been subjected to heavy policing - suspected activists stopped in the street and photographed, special squads assigned to monitor AFA, coppers on the street armed with mugshots of

suspected organisers, AFA groups surrounded on the street and held for hours. Interestingly, an anti-fascist protest in Central London (May 98) called by the ANL but not supported by AFA, had a very low key police presence; precisely because AFA wasn't there. So although there is very little public fascist activity, when there is, a great deal of time and money is spent by the State to prevent AFA from making an impact.

Politically AFA addressed the problems thrown up by the BNP election successes, particularly in east London, by developing a new strategy. 'Filling The Vacuum' was agreed in May 1995 and still remains the key to the future. Essentially 'Filling The Vacuum' recognises the limitations of only being 'anti' fascist and not being 'for' something else. Now it is up to the anti-fascists to take the initiative and fill the vacuum in the absence of anyone else. The alternative is to allow the fascists a free run.

The 'single issue' aspect of AFA, introduced in 1989 to maintain unity as we entered an intense period of street activity, has run its course. Although AFA will always maintain its independence, militant anti-fascists must now see it as their duty to ensure that the vacuum is filled. The election of a Labour government in 1997, with the Tories discredited and divided after 18 years in power, gives the BNP the opportunity to pose as the radical alternative.

The battle for the streets has been replaced by the battle for hearts and minds, and it is in the direct self-interest of militant anti-fascists to get involved. The 'revolutionary programmes' of the Left are not relevant to working class people and the fascists know this. An independent working class movement can fill the vacuum if it addresses the concerns of ordinary people as its priority.

In different parts of the country AFA activists have got involved with, or initiated, campaigns around working class issues. This is the territory that the BNP have chosen to work in, as the Front National has successfully done in France, and this is where the new chapter of anti-fascism begins.

# Between the Sheets

with Elvis Mondallant



The media have quite rightly highlighted the ethnic cleansing taking place in Kosovo, but the policy is not just confined to the Balkans. In the north of Ireland ethnic cleansing is the order of the day in Portadown. When the Orange Order attempted to march down the Garvaghy Road in July 1998 then the media gave the story prominence, showing the daily and nightly confrontations between supporters of the Orange Order and the RUC/British Army.

The sectarian murder of three boys at Ballymoney took the wind out of the Loyalists' public campaign and consequently the media coverage. The nightly demonstrations decreased in size and intensity, camera crews and journalists slipped quietly away.

The Loyalists however did not slip away; this is their territory. The truth is that events in July were designed to complement a sustained campaign of sectarian murder, firebombing and violent attacks against the Nationalist community in the town.

Since July last year the above aspects of the Loyalist campaign have been stepped up. Catholic shoppers have been attacked, businesses burnt out, Nationalists are in danger when they enter the town so they travel outside Portadown to shop. The events of Saturday 5th September, nearly two months after Drumcree, give an insight as to the intensity of the Loyalist campaign. *An Phoblacht/Republican News (10/9/98)* reports:

*"A ten year old boy received hospital treatment following prolonged attacks on Nationalists throughout the day and night while a Catholic owned shop, the third in three days was burnt to the ground.*

*The trouble began at 3pm after a 'Loyalist Right to March' rally, addressed by former LVF intermediary Kenny McClinton, broke up with over 500 Loyalists descending on the car park of High Street Mall to attack Nationalists with bricks, bottles and fireworks, and waving placards which read: 'No Taigs In Portadown'."*

Over 40 Orange parades are organised every year in Portadown and these parades form the centrepiece of Loyalist public activity. The Nationalist community actively opposes only one of these

parades. That is the march to Drumcree that uses, or attempts to use, the Garvaghy Road for its return leg. The peace process placed pressures on the British Establishment to prevent this leg of the march taking place. However in previous years military deployment has ensured a successful march for the Orange Order.

*"These military operations virtually amount to the imposition of martial law and curfew upon the Catholic/Nationalist communities. In the Garvaghy Road in 1997, at least 2,500 members of the RUC and British Army were used to subjugate the local community whose population totals 6000 men, women and children."*

*"Nationalist residents who have attempted to mount peaceful protests against Orange Order marches have been beaten and forcibly removed. Over two hundred people were injured in unprovoked assaults in 1996 and a similar number again on July 6th 1997 on the Garvaghy Road alone." (Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition web site).*

Trimble, who now has the Nobel Peace Prize on his mantelpiece, has refused to meet with residents' representatives. In July 1997 however he did feel obliged to meet Billy Wright (no longer with us) at Drumcree. Wright was leader of the LVF and headed up Loyalist death squads, based in the town, responsible for over 150 sectarian murders since 1970.

More recently, *An Phoblacht/Republican News (10/12/98)* reports:

*"On Saturday 28 November, Nationalists leaving St Patrick's Hall (from where Nationalist Robert Hamill was beaten to death last May by Loyalists as the RUC looked on) were confronted with a gang of Loyalists wielding baseball bats and golf clubs.*

*Two of the nationalists received injuries, with one being brought to hospital for treatment, including 14 stitches. Some of their attackers were wearing band uniform and had attended a march in support of the Drumcree Orangemen in the town that afternoon."*

This Loyalist campaign is purely sectarian in nature, the objectives plain for all to see; to terrorise, isolate and eventually drive out the Nationalist community from Portadown. The

## Quotes

*"Traditional anti-racist initiatives have failed to strike a chord with those members of the borough's white working class who feel marginalised by the presence of ethnic minorities. In fact, youth workers now admit the clumsy policies of the past - which labelled every white pupil as a potential racist - may have helped fuel the discontent on which racist political groups feed." (Evening Standard 17/3/99)*

**Comment:** Taken from an article reviewing 'The Routes of Racism' report and video, which was initially ignored by its sponsors Greenwich council, but is now getting some timely publicity in view of the launching of the Civil Rights Movement.

*"Party units up and down the country are getting involved with their communities and engaging in community politics; local issue leaflets are being produced that address voters about things which directly concern them."*

**Comment:** Where the fascists go, anti-fascists must follow.

*"What improvement was there in the condition of the slaves? I don't think there was much. How's anyone better off? If someone's owned by someone, it's in the interests of the owner to look after his property, that is the slave. Under the liberal dogma of free contract, they have no interest in looking after them." (Observer 18/10/98)*

**Comment:** Lord Sudeley giving the English aristocracy's enlightened view on slavery.

*"How can Lady Thatcher disbelieve all the stories of repression and torture that came out of Chile over all the years?" (Daily Mirror 20/10/98)*

**Comment:** Dr Sheila Cassidy, a prisoner of the Pinochet regime herself, failing to understand that Thatcher didn't disbelieve the stories, she just thought it was perfectly acceptable.

methods employed are reminiscent of fascist activity against refugees in Germany, the activities of the KKK in the United States or the expulsion of Albanians from Kosovo. Similarities do not end with regard to the Loyalist *modus operandi*. The underlying ideology is laced with supremacism - the Loyalists are a superior breed of people and therefore, as in the past, entitled to enhanced citizenship. For housing, jobs and access to the political process then Loyalists should be given first priority.

It came as no surprise for AFA to discover that fascists from London were active at the Drumcree stand off last July. Birds of a feather flock together.

Despite the backdrop of the peace process there is no end in sight to the Loyalist campaign. Instead it seems likely to be maintained or even to intensify. The Nationalist community are ghettoised and on the receiving end of a vicious terror. Meanwhile the ladies and gentlemen of the British press have moved on, as far as they are concerned Portadown is old news.

## THE BIG ISSUE - CLASS

In a December feature article for the *Big Issue*, journalist Matthew Sweet asks the question: "Racism. Are we all guilty?" He begins by examining the police force. We are given familiar figures: "Black men are four times more likely to be stopped by police than their white peers." Nothing new there. We then get onto very familiar ground. How well does the black and Asian middle class fair? Like many before him, and doubtless many after, Sweet gauges the progress of black and Asian people in British society by a head count of ethnic minority MPs, QCs, judges and Army officers. The argument being: "If the 5.5 per cent ethnic minority population of the UK were fairly represented in the judiciary, there would be at least 30 black judges. There are five." The condition of society, with regard to institutionalised racism, is judged from the perspective of the professional middle class. An interesting question for Sweet and his ilk to ponder might be: How many people from the working class end up as MPs, QCs, judges and Army officers? For militant anti-fascism the key question with regard to the British Establishment is not its racial composition, but its activity. Our aim is not an ethnically diverse ruling class.

During the 1984-85 miners' strike, and later with the printers at Wapping, we saw the police develop and refine a paramilitary mode of operation. In both of these disputes, and others, the institutions of the British State were



Riot police attack striking miners - Orgreave 1984

deployed against the Trade Union organisations involved and their working class supporters. Workers on picket lines, often with their families, were treated to a short, sharp lesson in politics. For many it was a revelation; brutalised and often fitted up on charges by a police force that they had previously reasoned were there to catch burglars and help old ladies across the road. In both of these disputes, and many others, the racial make-up of the strikers was overwhelmingly white and English. Mineworkers and printers had been established in stable working class communities for generations.

It is certainly true that, if we stick to Trade Union disputes, when black and Asian workers have faced the police on the picket line then police racism is an added dimension. The point is that these organisations, the police, judiciary, etc, are primarily anti-working class in nature. The racism along with other forms of bigotry comes free of charge.

This attitude is typical of the middle class liberal agenda, asking people to inspect themselves for racist attitudes, he hopes to change centuries old institutions by creating a giant guilt complex.

For us the first priority is to confront racism on home ground, in the working class communities. The horrible truth is that racists do not feel guilty. In the working class communities, where resources are scarce, racism takes hold. Not because of any inherent bigotry in the white population, but because people require housing, jobs, health care, education and a whole range of services financed from, in most inner city boroughs, an ever decreasing budget. Immigrant communities, or more recently refugees, are perceived as competition for the scarce resources available.

When people are about the business of sustaining themselves and their families then the economics of the situation determine the political agenda. Racism is placed on that agenda by fascism and right-wing Conservatism or Labourism. The above scenario is a long way from the middle class professions. It is however the situation that needs to be tackled by working class activists who are committed to fighting racism in society.

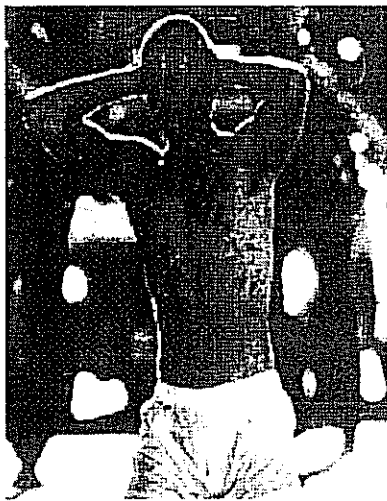
## NO PROBLEM?

And finally, did you see the BBC2 programme on the fascists called 'The Lost Race' (24/3/99) ? The programme starts by announcing "two decades ago Tyndall led the National Front, one of the biggest Far Right parties in Europe. Now the movement is tiny and divided. This film is about the long journey into oblivion." What! We might as well pack up and go home then.

No mention of the BNP's continual growth since the Rights For Whites campaign in 1990, or Beackon's election win on the Isle of Dogs in 1993. The entry of the Far Right into national and regional government all over Europe was completely ignored.

Far too much time was spent trying to ridicule fringe elements on the Far Right scene rather than concentrate on the issues at stake. It seems strange to put out a programme saying the Far Right are finished a few weeks before the BNP will have over 20 million leaflets delivered free of charge by the Post Office in the Euro-elections. Why on earth were *Searchlight* involved in this programme? Their analysis of the coming year in the March edition of the magazine states, "There has never been no greater urgency to confront the fascist Right than now." The long journey into oblivion?

## REVIEWS



### AMERICAN HISTORY X Film

Tony Kaye, the English director of this film, who made his name in the TV advert business, has tried to distance himself from the film because he was dropped and the final edit was done by actor Edward Norton. Kaye has been described as 'the greatest director alive', then you learn that the author of the quote is Kaye himself so with this in mind I approached the film with a little scepticism.

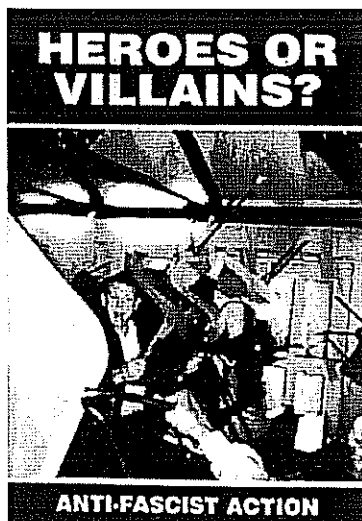
The story line goes like this, young, charismatic and articulate Derek becomes neo-nazi skinhead organiser after his racist fire-fighter father is killed attending a fire at a crack house. Sent to jail after the brutal murder of two black men attempting to steal his car. While in

jail becomes disillusioned with white supremacy because his Aryan Brotherhood (AB) friends trade drugs with Mexicans. He gets raped in the shower by an ex-comrade. After a visit by his former black high school principal he becomes an anti-racist, forms a friendship with a black prisoner. When he leaves jail he tries to convince his younger brother Danny, now a part of the gang he set up, to turn his back on the neo-nazis.

American History X, visually, is a well made film which shows that Kaye has a real talent for the film directing art. The film includes outstanding acting performances from Edward Norton (Derek) and Edward Furlong (Danny) who play the brothers. This is not the flawed masterpiece that Kaye would have us believe. The story line had the premise of a film that needed making, but was let down by the obvious clichés of the shower rape, which comes over as a shampoo ad ( see it and you'll know what I mean), and Derek's road to Damascus conversion to anti-racism because of the weakness of the AB. Instead of making his views stronger he renounces them. The main message of the film is if you let hate run your life then hate will destroy your life.

Despite my original scepticism towards the film and its lack of political insight, as a piece of entertainment the film, in spite of its flaws, is excellent and worth seeing.

Red Dragon



### HEROES OR VILLAINS? Anti-Fascist Action - £2.00

This is a powerful document. The lasting impression is that there is a history in this country, spanning decades, of violent confrontation between fascists and anti-fascists.

The pamphlet is packed with examples of clashes at street level and is organised into three sections: 'The 1930s', 'After the War' and 'Recent Times'. Sources include national and local press cuttings, anti-fascist publications, personal memoirs and fascist material.

Readers of FT are all too familiar with the activities of the 'Liberal' Left. We refer to those who wish to confront fascism, or even transform society, through a series of well choreographed, and well policed, placard waving activities. For these people, political violence is an interesting historical feature, sometimes necessary then, but never now.

The truth is, as this pamphlet clearly illustrates, that whenever the fascists have been successfully challenged for control of the streets, be it in the 1930s or the 1980s, then physical force has been a necessary component of the anti-fascist strategy.

Elvis Mondallant

### SABATE GUERRILLA EXTRAORDINARY

Antonio Tellez  
Elephant Editions and AK Press

This book tells the storey of an anti-fascist guerilla leader who fought in the Spanish Civil War and later organised armed action against the Franco regime. During the Civil War Sabate experienced first hand the tactic employed by the Communist Party of placing Anarchist units in no win situations at the front. This was a deliberate and often successful ploy designed to wipe out the Communist Party's political rivals.

After one of these occurrences Sabate and co. assassinated the Communist Party commissar responsible for the slaughter of an Anarchist unit, deserting immediately afterwards and eventually being captured and imprisoned.



An escape was engineered and in the aftermath four Carabineros (Communist Party Police force) were shot dead. Sabate then made his way to an Anarchist regiment where he served for the remainder of the war.

At the end of the conflict Sabate's unit crossed into France where they were held in a 'concentration camp' until the outbreak of the Second World War. Soon after Sabate, living in France, began to organise and lead armed activity across the border in fascist Spain.

The remainder of the book tells of the vicious repression under the Franco regime and the exploits of Sabate and his followers during their many forays across the border. He was eventually killed while engaged in armed action in January 1960.

This book is a little dry, perhaps losing something in the translation; it does however tell an inspiring story of anti-fascists who, despite the odds against them, risked and often lost their lives fighting fascism.

Elvis Mondallant



**ART AS RESISTANCE**

Bernd Langer - £7.50

The title is slightly misleading as this book deals with the history of the German Left since 1945, with particular emphasis on present day anti-fascism.

Written by an experienced militant from Gottingen it gives a thoughtful analysis of the German anti-fascist movement - and while it discusses many familiar problems, such as the isolation of militants, criminalisation by the state physical opposition alone not being enough and the importance of politics, the author draws very different conclusions to AFA.

The key difference being AFA's orientation to the working class, an idea many European anti-fascists reject. This failure to build a working class movement has allowed the Far Right to gain considerable support in many European countries.



The book also details the history of KUK (Art and Struggle) and has a lot of illustrations of their posters and activities. It explains how the German State criminalised KUK, claiming many of their posters encouraged violence and 'terrorism', and the steps KUK took to resist these attacks.

Translated from the original German by the Canadian Anti-Fascist Forum, it has to be said that the text does lose a bit in the translation. Despite that, an interesting read and it is important that militants write their own history.

Dan Marden

**WHITE NOISE - Inside the international nazi skinhead scene.**

A Searchlight publication - £4.50

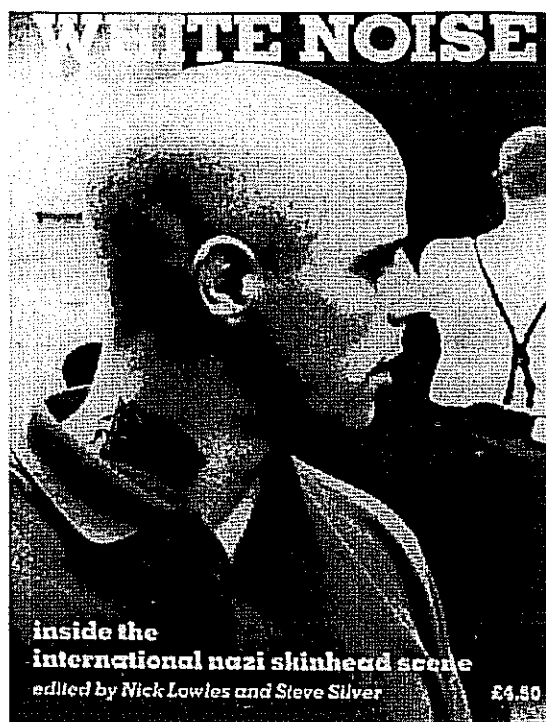
The problem with this 88-page booklet, despite its wealth of information, is the political spin that it puts on the fight against Blood & Honour and C18.

'White Noise' traces the history of the nazi music scene from Rock Against Communism to B&H and the C18 takeover. While it covers most of the relevant events, the role of militant anti-fascism, and AFA in particular, is down played.

There are a number of complimentary references to AFA, however this doesn't disguise the fact that AFA are presented as bit part players rather than taking the leading role.

For example, describing the successful clash between AFA and B&H at Speakers Corner on May 27th 1989 it reports the day ended as anti-fascists "marched out of the area in triumphant mood to Trafalgar Square." In fact, as the Sunday Telegraph reported "that night the shop...was attacked by anti-fascists with sledgehammers." This action being the key factor in closing down the last of the shops selling nazi merchandise.

The victory at Waterloo in September 1992 is claimed as "a victory for the anti-fascist movement." Another decisive moment in preventing B&H being able to operate openly is taken away from the organisers and given over to groups overtly hostile to AFA's strategy.



Similarly, the C18-backed memorial gig that was planned for January 15th 1994 is referred to "when anti-fascists successfully gave the authorities little choice but to cancel the event." Despite all the other anti-fascist groups mobilising on the day, it was AFA's decisive intentions against C18 at The Little Driver in Bow and at The Wellington in Waterloo that blew the C18 myth out of the water.

These criticisms are important because AFA has shown it can take the initiative and make a difference. To present AFA as just another part of a broad anti-fascist movement all pulling in the same direction devalues the very strategies that make AFA so different and effective.

Dan Marden

**IWCA PAMPHLET**

BM IWCA, London, WC1N 3XX - £2.00

Here we have a compilation of discussion documents produced in the early period of the IWCA's history. Two themes run through the compilation: AFA's desire to invest in a more developed political strategy and the betrayal of working class interests by the Labour Party and much of the 'Left'.

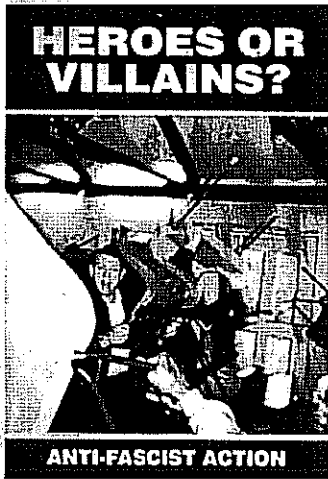
In April 1994 the BNP announced: "No more marches, meetings, punch-ups." A direct result of AFA's progress at street level. What was not immediately obvious was that the BNP had embarked on a new strategy centred around community based politics as with the FN in France. The fascists had withdrawn from the arena of physical confrontation and

instead were appearing on people's doorsteps wearing a shirt and tie, campaigning for improved nursery provision. AFA's physical force strategy was left hanging in the air.

AFA had smashed the fascists on the streets and maintained a political vacuum for the 'Left', but who was to fill it? The Labour Party now denies the existence of the working class. The hard 'Left' organisations reminiscent of an old uncle with twenty year bowel cancer and the Trade Unions stifled by reformism. The answer to the above question is that it's down to us.

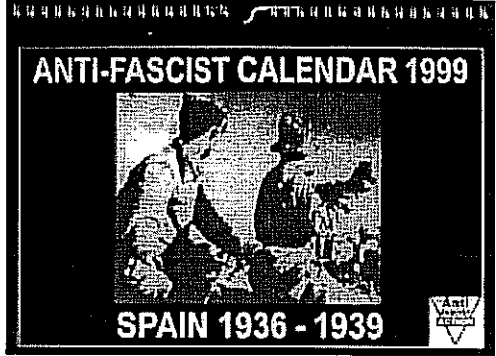
This pamphlet gives us the 'Big picture', a political overview of the IWCA strategy and the reasoning behind it.

Elvis Mondallant



"At which point in this continuous tradition of confrontation do you draw the line and say physical opposition to fascism is no longer acceptable"

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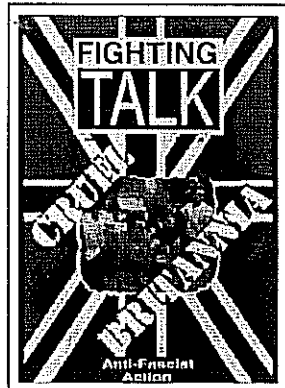
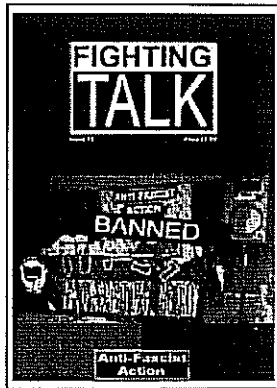
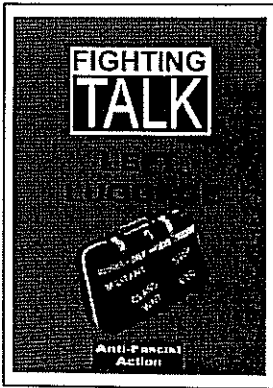
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